



# Staff/ Student Relations Policy

*Policy promoting positive staff and student relations at the African Leadership University, African Leadership College Mauritius, African Leadership University Rwanda and affiliated institutions, ALX and ALFC.*

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*Passed by: African Leadership Unleashed Ltd.*

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## **POLICY STATEMENT**

African Leadership University (ALU) is a community where people work and study together. We seek to promote harmonious relationships between all members of the community, including between staff and students. In order to ensure that our duties are conducted and perceived in a professional and proper manner, it is necessary to distinguish between, and take account of, consensual or personal relationships which may overlap with professional ones. We pay particular interest to close connections, that are regularly experienced at ALU. We expect the highest level of respect, integrity and civility to run throughout the organisation, which staff and students both adhere to. This document acts as a policy and a code, providing guidance with regard to the level of interaction between ALU staff members and students registered with ALU.

In this context, consensual or personal relationship is defined as:

- A family relationship
- A business/commercial/financial relationship
- A sexual/romantic relationship

## **SCOPE OF POLICY**

This policy covers relationships between staff, staff and student interns at ALU. It governs all areas where a relationship between a staff member and a student may raise questions about conflict of interest, trust or confidentiality. In particular, this Policy covers conflicts of interest, which may arise in the following areas:

- Management and supervision
- All aspects of faculty, teaching and learning
- Any in-house internships or work experience that may take place within ALC or ALU Head Office
- Pastoral care
- Assignment work or provision of services and facilities to students
- Benefits provided to students such as external opportunities

## **REASONS FOR THE POLICY**

ALU bears the responsibility of maintaining an open and tolerant environment conducive to the practice of higher education. This includes fostering professional, trusting relationships between staff and students. As such, this Policy has been designed to:

- Clarify the conduct expected of both staff and students jointly
- Clarify the conduct that is expected of Staff in particular in relation to this policy
- Clarify the conduct that is expected of Students in particular in relation to this policy
- Formalise the management expectations with regard to this Policy
- Provide a clear reporting guideline and protocol for incidences where there may be inappropriate interactions occurring between students and staff
- List sanctions that may be applicable where incidences of breaches of this Policy have been established

ALU staff members are expected to mentor and guide students towards their academic and professional career goals. We believe that trusting relationships built upon positive ideals are essential to the growth of students and staff at ALU. As such both students and staff bear the responsibility of complying with this policy.

## **JURISDICTIONAL STATEMENT**

All staff and students should be aware of, read, understand, and comply with this policy and report breaches or violations of this Policy. This Policy provides a list of persons who should be contacted should a staff or student need guidance into understanding this Policy.

ALU will comply with any relevant laws in Mauritius, Rwanda, Kenya and South Africa and provide information to authorities when requested or required to do so.

## **DEFINITIONS**

**“The African Leadership University” “ALU”** refers to African Leadership University, African Leadership College Mauritius, African Leadership University Rwanda and affiliated institutions, ALX and ALFC.

**“The College” “ALC” or “College”** refers to African Leadership College.

**“Pastoral Care”** refers to support provided by a staff member to student aimed at fostering “values”, particularly those of “mutual respect, responsibility and service within the community” so as to provide students with every opportunity to value themselves, to experience well-being and develop their full potential.

**“Close personal relationship”** refers to any relationship where interest can be drawn from the relationship which may involve a friendship, relative or cultural family relationship, financial dependent, business partner

**“Intimate personal relationship”** refers to any consensual relationship, regardless of gender such as dating, romantic, or sexual liaison, including dates, kissing, sexual advances, or touching.

**“Student”** refers to any person admitted to the African Leadership College who is either currently enrolled or was enrolled the previous semester and registered for a future semester. Students include persons attending classes on campus, off-campus or online as well as those who are interns with ALU. For the purposes of this policy, students do not include Fellows.

**“Staff”** refers to any person employed by ALU or any affiliated organisations such as ALX in a non-internship position. This includes persons who are on permanent full-time employment, part-time employment, contractual basis as well as those who have been indirectly employed by ALU but maintain direct interaction or responsibility for students, such as Cleaning Team, Catering Staff, Security Guards and Drivers.

**“Fellow”** refers to any person directly recruited into the ALU Fellowship programme. For the purposes of this policy, Fellows are defined as, and considered, ALU **“staff”**.

**“Professional”** *For Staff:* considered to define the duty of care that staff owe students or other staff members; and is demonstrated through consistent care, diligence, integrity and respect.

*For Students:* behaving in a manner that is consistent with our values of respect and integrity and having due regard for staff members.

An **“inappropriate”** or **“overly close relationship”** can be inferred within or referred to describe a range of friendships, amorous relationships, or familial relations, where such relations could reasonably or immediately lead to a conflict of interest. As explained later in this policy, determining whether a relationship is **overly close or inappropriate** will include a consideration of factors such as:

- The social maturity of the student
- The age difference between the student and staff; in avoiding real or perceived favoritism
- The student’s circumstance at the initiation of the relationship and the nature of the relationship when a staff member joined ALU
- The influence the staff member may or may not have over the student’s academic progress or future career goals
- The nature of the relationship, including time spent together and the academic character of the contact
- The timing of contact and location of interactions, i.e. communication during the day on campus may be evaluated differently than that at night at a non-ALU event

## **MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITY**

'Management' at ALU includes the CEO, the Executive Vice President, Academic Affairs the Head of College, all ExCo members, all Directors and Managers. These persons have a duty of care towards staff members and students and as such are burdened with ensuring that the ALU environment is conducive for the purposes of teaching and learning as well as all other forms of healthy staff-student integration and safe interactions. It is expected that management will:

- educate those who they manage, provide support for students, and educate themselves regarding the implications of this policy
- be aware of risks in relation to staff / student relationships and staff conduct towards students within their area of responsibility, and manage those risks appropriately;
- provide advice to their staff and students on the management of staff / student relationships and staff conduct towards students;
- manage and respond to any reports of unprofessional or inappropriate conduct by staff towards students or other breach of this procedure
- seek advice or support from Student Life team or Public Affairs teams if necessary.

In order to maintain a safe and trustworthy environment, no form of intimate personal relationship under any condition will be tolerated between a member of the management team and a student at ALU.

## **STAFF AND STUDENT RELATIONS**

As evidenced throughout this policy, staff and students are jointly responsible for their conduct whilst registered - or employed - with ALU and as such are expected to comply with this policy and maintain a professional standard of behavior at all times.

By way of this guidance, all staff should:

- maintain an appropriate physical and emotional distance from students and perform your University duties in the best interests of ALU without favour towards any individual student over another student;
- favor the use of official communication channels such as emails, slack or hangouts for communications with students, avoiding unsecured communication channels such as social media sites and internet chat rooms;
- ensure, as much as possible, that the content of any communication to student is focused on learning, work experience, project matters or student life activities and should be communicated in a professional way;
- should not share your personal contact details such as home address, private telephone number and email address;

- where possible, ensure that meetings and discussions about ALU matters occur on campus or at ALU Head Office. Where not possible, favor public venues, such as a library or a café, where practicable;
- refer students to Student Life or the relevant support service and limit your role in providing personal support to a student where this is not part of your employment duties.

Note: the same guidelines and rules should apply when you and the student are participating in fieldwork, conferences and other University activities away from your usual workplace.

The following lists violations of the Professional standard of behaviour expected from both staff and students at ALU:

- **Loss of personal civility** towards one another, including shouting, personal attacks or insults, displays of violent temper (such as throwing objects, hitting furniture or walls, etc.)
- **Any use of physical force** on another individual, including but not limited to pushing, grabbing, hitting or poking; etc. This also includes all measures of force as is described in the Criminal or Penal Codes in Mauritius, Rwanda, Kenya and South Africa, or any other relevant legislations. Participating in or deliberately abetting disruption, interference, or intimidation will also be considered as a breach of this policy and will be treated as such.
- **Favoritism, unfair treatment, disclosure of personal information** obtained for the purpose of ALU processes or any form of behaviour that may hinder the fair treatment or progress of a student or staff at ALU. Favoritism occurs when a staff member fosters an inappropriate or overly close relationship, or relations, with a student which may cause the staff member to act unfairly in the future or which may lead to a conflict of interest.

## **INTIMATE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN STAFF MEMBERS AND STUDENTS**

At ALU, we are committed to an environment where decisions are made on the basis of merit. We value good professional relationship between staff and students and appreciate that this is heavily reliant on mutual trust and confidence which can be jeopardized when staff and students enter into an intimate relationship. Intimate personal relationships between staff and students raises questions of conflict of interest, trust, and confidence which are essential elements for professional working relationships and equal treatment in teaching, learning, selection, assessment and research. There is also a danger that intimate personal relationships exploit the relationship of authority and trust that is inherent in the relationship between members of staff and students.

For the protection of staff and students, the boundaries and moral obligations of the

professional role of staff must be fully recognized and respected. Staff should recognise their professional and ethical responsibilities to protect the interest of students, to respect the trust involved in the staff/student relationship and to accept the obligations inherent in that responsibility. Therefore, in order to maintain a healthy relationship between staff and student, no form of intimate personal relationship under any condition, including consensual conduct of sexual nature, between a staff member and a student is permitted.

## **EVENTS INVOLVING BOTH STAFF AND STUDENTS**

At ALU, events involving both staff and students are a regular occurrence. As a diverse institution, student and staff members often co-facilitate and participate in jointly-organized events aimed at improving education, accelerating career growth, or providing student-support. This is a healthy and vital element to positive interaction and as such, is encouraged at ALU. We do however, understand the delicate balance that must be struck between staff and students with regard to interaction during all such events. The following is therefore applicable with regard to any event involving both staff and students:

### Approval for events involving students and staff

Staff must get prior, documented approval from ALU before hosting a student-event. When planning **any** event where both students and staff will be present, and alcohol will be available, staff must acquire pre-approval from ALU. Staff can get pre-approval from the Director of Student Life or Head of College at least seven working days prior to the event. ALU retains the discretion to decline a request for an event and will provide reasons for their decision upon request. The calendar event should include the event name, expected attendance, and whether alcohol will be present.

### Alcohol at events involving staff and students

ALU is committed to providing a safe, healthy learning community for all our members. We recognise that the improper or excessive use of alcohol may interfere with ALU's mission and vision by negatively affecting behaviour, reputation and the health and safety of students and staff members. As such, the use of alcohol in staff/student events will only be approved on exceptional basis. Events should receive express approval via the aforementioned process. This is an evidence based precaution, in which ALU has chosen to consider the negative implications that alcohol can have on a person and on interaction between persons.

All staff and students are advised that a breach of this Policy may lead to Disciplinary measures being taken against the individual by ALU. ALU will not accept accountability for any damages, loss or injury to any member of the ALU community or any other person, regardless of their status, that have been caused directly or



indirectly by the effects of alcohol consumption at an ALU-sponsored event.

## Drug or prescription medication use at events involving staff and students

The use of dangerous drugs (not including prescription medication) is an illegal act, in breach of the Mauritian Dangerous Drug act of 2000 (as amended). The list of what is considered illegal in Mauritius can be found within the act. In line with this Act, no form of dangerous drug whatsoever is permitted within any of the premises leased or owned by ALU or during any event organised by ALU. ALU reserves the right to report any use, sale, delivery or possession of illegal substances to relevant authorities, in line with the relevant legislations We advise that persons who are on prescription medication refrain from consuming alcohol whilst on medication, for the benefit of their own health and safety.

### **REPORTING PROCEDURE**

Any student or staff member who observes or becomes aware of any violation of this policy should contact the Director of Student Life, or the VP People and Strategy, as soon as possible.

#### Formal Inquiry

Complaints should be filed according to the [Complaints Policy](#). There will be no retaliation for any report made lacking malicious intent.

ALU reserves the right to investigate any alleged violations of this policy that occur in the context of the ALU program or activity or that otherwise affects ALU's working or learning environments, regardless of whether that conduct occurred on or off any residence or property that has been leased by ALU.

#### Sanctions and Interventions

All staff and students engaged in any inappropriate or overly close relationship should notify their Line Manager, the Director of Student Life and VP of People & Strategy. Staff will be required to terminate the relationship and appropriate sanctions will be considered, which may include staff transfer or termination of agreement.

Failure to do so may be subject to sanctions or termination of student registration/ staff contract.

## STANDARDS FOR STAFF CONDUCT

### Professionalism

“Professional” conduct is consistent with the duty of care that you (the staff member) owes the students. In acting professionally, you not only demonstrate care but also diligence, integrity and respect for students and staff alike.

At ALU, we cannot overemphasize the influence of exhibiting a professional attitude at all times, especially during interaction with students. As an ALU ambassadors and role models for our students, it is essential that staff members embrace a professional attitude beyond just the teaching and learning environment. As such, we consider professionalism in the manner in which you address students and the manner in which you conduct yourself as essential for the following reasons:

1. Students are our focus at ALU - we work as much as is possible towards incorporating an individual approach to each student's needs, goals and concerns. Unprofessional behavior from any staff individual may inhibit trusting relationships and therefore negatively impact ALU's ability to work towards achieving these goals with our students .
2. Staff members should act as role models for our students - Unprofessional behaviour may lead to unhealthy relationships where disrespect becomes a norm. We expect our staff to strive to earn and maintain our student's respect in all interactions.

In order to provide more context into the behavior that may be considered as 'unprofessional', the following provides a non-exhaustive list, which can be expanded over time:

- Requesting students to perform inappropriate personal errands unrelated to the didactic, investigational, or clinical situation at hand
- Forcing political, social, philosophical, or religious views on students; faculty who express a firm stance on a sensitive issue should be alert to the distinction between indoctrination and education (*Education acquiring knowledge and thinking critically about it. Indoctrination is aimed at influencing people to believe in facts, without being able to back these facts with any evidence, but opinion.*)
- Facilitating, encouraging, or allowing any illegal activity, including but not limited to student's possession or use of illegal drugs or an underage student's use of alcohol
- Any type of discrimination, as outlined in the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy.
- Any behavior towards a student which is unwelcome, unreasonable, and

could reasonably be interpreted as intended to offend, humiliate, or intimidate a student

- Discussing details of their own intimate and sensitive personal matters (such as sexual relationships, mental health or financial position) in one-on-one talks with students, where this has not been practiced in the context of exercising 'pastoral care'.
- Participating in an action that might exert pressure on students to drink or drink to excess, including but not limited to participating in drinking games with students
- Sexual advances towards a student, including flirtation, solo dinner dates and gifting unwarranted gifts to students
- Any other behavior that would jeopardise a healthy 'staff-student' relationship or actions that could be considered as a breach of the duty of care owed by a staff member to a student.
- Lending money to or borrowing from their own students, or students you may reasonably expect to supervise
- Engaging in any behaviour of a threatening or criminal nature, or which reasonably makes the student feel unsafe, including stalking, repeated attempts to impose unwanted communication or contact that is not the appropriate performance of your duties, harassment, assault, sexual assault or bullying;
- Excessive socialization (*for the purposes of this policy, this is defined as consistent interaction outside premises leased, rented or owned by ALU, with no legitimate pastoral or academic purpose*) with a non-familial student.

## **EXCEPTION**

If a close personal relationship or an intimate personal relationship existed prior to the professional relationship between a staff and a student, both the staff and the student should disclose their relationship to their Line Manager, the Director of Student Life and the VP of People & Strategy, whichever relevant. ALU will take the appropriate steps, consistent with this policy, including, but not limited to, the removal of any reporting or similar relationship between the staff and the student. Both the student and the staff might be required to sign a document stipulating that this relationship is consensual.

## **CONTACT**

It may be difficult for a staff member to objectively evaluate the nature of their contact with a student. If a staff member or student remains unsure whether certain conduct violates ALU policy, they should contact any of the following persons:

1. Their Line Managers
2. The Director of Student Life
3. VP, People & Strategy
4. Director of Legal